

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 6467

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to honorary degrees for students who were ordered into internment camps.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing honorary degrees for students who were ordered into internment camps.

**Sponsors:** Senators Shin, Kastama, Delvin, Hobbs, Berkey, Rockefeller, Marr, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Roach and Kline.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/19/10, 2/23/10 [DP].

#### **Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows honorary degrees to be conferred by institutions of higher education upon persons who were students at those institutions in 1942 but did not graduate because they were ordered into an internment camp.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Carlyle, Driscoll, Haler, Hasegawa and White.

**Staff:** Cece Clynch (786-7195).

#### **Background:**

On February 19, 1942, United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the Secretary of War "to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he ... may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any persons to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restriction the Secretary of War...may impose in his discretion." Although the

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order did not specify any particular nationality or ethnic group, it was used against those with Japanese, Italian, and German ancestry.

More than 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated in 10 camps throughout the United States during World War II. Of these, 62 percent were Nisei (American-born, second generation Japanese American) or Sansei (third-generation Japanese American). The rest were Issei (Japanese immigrants and resident aliens, first-generation Japanese American). Americans of Italian and German ancestry were also targeted by these restrictions. About 11,000 persons of German ancestry and 3,000 persons of Italian ancestry were interned. In addition, some Jewish refugees and some members of ethnic groups from other Axis countries were interned.

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**Summary of Bill:**

Honorary degrees may be conferred, by the University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University, or community and technical colleges in existence in 1942, upon persons who were students at those institutions in 1942 but did not graduate because they were ordered into an internment camp. An honorary degree may also be requested by a representative of a deceased person who meets these conditions. "Internment camp" is defined as a relocation center to which persons were ordered pursuant to Executive Order 9066.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Because of Executive Order 9066, thousands of people of Japanese ancestry were interned until the end of the war. Many of these people were deprived of the opportunity to pursue their education. Two thirds were American citizens. It is time to rectify this situation. Most of those interned from the Puget Sound area were interned at Minidoka in Idaho. This bill presents an opportunity to treat people fairly and correct a wrong. Executive Order 9066 was issued on February 19, 1942, which was exactly 68 years ago. It was another time, another life. While interned, people lived surrounded by barbed wire and guards with guns and were subjected to extreme hot and cold temperatures. Families were fragmented. After December 7, 1941, persons of Japanese ancestry were called "Dirty Jap" and spit upon. After the Executive Order was issued, they were excluded from this area, their homes, and the schools they had been attending. Receiving an honorary degree from the University of Washington a short time ago brought great joy, along with

pride in being recognized as a Husky. That event was a time of healing. It is important that this not be forgotten so as to learn not to judge on the basis of race or national origin. It is never too late to do the right thing. Lives were interrupted with forced exile and education was disrupted. On May 18, 2008, at the University of Washington, a ceremony was held honoring University of Washington Nikkei students from 1941 and 1942. Those on whom honorary degrees were conferred were made very proud and happy. It is important that other Nikkei students receive their honorary baccalaureate degrees soon.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Bob Nakamura, Japanese American Citizens League-Olympia Chapter; Mitsuye Mihara; and Takashi Matsoi.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.